

# Early Thoughts on Controlling the Nuclear Arms Race

McGeorge Bundy

A Report to the Secretary of State,  
January 1953

In April 1952 Secretary of State Dean Acheson set up a Panel of Consultants on Disarmament, consisting of Robert Oppenheimer, as Chairman, Vannevar Bush, John S. Dickey, Allen W. Dulles, and Joseph Johnson. Oppenheimer, then Director of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, was completing his service as Chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission; Bush was back at the Carnegie Institution of Washington and still the dean of American scientific advisers. Dickey and Johnson, one President of Dartmouth and the other President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, had worked on problems of disarmament and United Nations affairs as State Department officers in earlier years. Allen Dulles was practicing law in New York. I became secretary to the Panel, responsible for keeping track of its discussions and writing up its conclusions.

Acheson and Oppenheimer had initially thought in terms of a review of American policy and proposals on disarmament, but the Panel soon concluded that the relevant field of concern was necessarily broader, and with Acheson's support its inquiry was widened accordingly. When its conclusions were reported orally to Secretary Acheson late in the year, he encouraged the preparation of a written report for the use of the next Administration, and such a report was submitted to him just before he left office in January 1953. Recently my research associate, Donald White, obtained from the Department of State a declassified copy of the report, in the slightly sanitized version that was circulated inside the Government at the time. In somewhat abbreviated form we present it here.

The basic judgments which animated this report have considerable resonance in 1982: that the dangers in the Soviet-American nuclear arms race were great and growing, and that without deeper public understanding and stronger executive leadership the United States could not expect to deal effectively with those dangers. The members of the Panel came to their work

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with varied degrees of knowledge about the realities of nuclear weapons, and especially about the pace of the growth of their numbers and destructive power. No one on the Panel, not even Robert Oppenheimer (and certainly not the secretary), emerged from the Panel's nine-month exposure to nuclear realities and prospects without a greatly deepened sense of enormous and rapidly approaching peril. What made the experience especially searing was that it took place in the shadow of seven years of intensifying conflict between the Soviet Union and the West, with open warfare still continuing in Korea. As the report says, the Panel felt compelled to take full account of both nuclear danger and the Soviet threat to peace.

In the main the arguments and recommendations of the panel speak for themselves. Students of the period will know that Robert Oppenheimer wrote an eloquent essay making parts of the argument public ("Atomic Weapons and American Policy," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 4 [July 1953], pp. 525-535) and also that the highly classified report became part of the input for a project of the Eisenhower Administration that was called successively "Operation Candor," then "Operation Wheaties," and finally "Atoms for Peace." The ironies in this result will be apparent from the document itself. There is also an instructive contrast between the argument for reducing "our commitment to the use of nuclear weapons," here set forth by a group which included Allen Dulles, and the policy of massive retaliation announced a year later by his older brother.

In renewing my acquaintance with the report, I have found that parts of the analysis seem seriously dated, and other parts not. But I have not let these impressions affect the modest editing. I have made some cuts of repetitive material to save space, but the only major substantive omission is an extended argument for improved continental air defense; that issue has since been largely overtaken by the missile age. For the rest, it seems right to let readers judge for themselves which arguments are still pertinent and which are merely evidence of the ways in which one group of relatively well-informed citizens got things wrong thirty years ago.

*Department of State Top Secret Security Information*

TO: All Holders of Top Secret Document Entitled "Report of Panel of Consultants of Disarmament"

SUBJECT: Explanatory Note (to be retained with copy of report)



Certain passages of the Report as originally submitted by the Panel contained some technical atomic energy information which was determined by the Atomic Energy Commission to constitute Restricted Data within the meaning of the Atomic Energy Act of 1946.

In order to facilitate study of the Report by those officers who are concerned with the subjects covered, but who do not have specific clearance for access to Restricted Data, a few passages have been rewritten by the Department of State and the AEC so as not to reveal the technical information in question, but without in any way altering the burden of argument in the Report.

*Letter of Transmittal*

The Secretary of State  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have the honor to transmit with this letter a final report of the work of the Panel of Consultants on Disarmament appointed by you in April, 1952. This report reviews some of the realities of the present contest in armaments and aims at an understanding of what these realities mean for the policy of the United States. It is our response to the suggestion made by you at our last meeting, that a written record of our principal conclusions would be useful. . . .

We should like to underscore the meaning of our unanimity in signing this report. We came to the work of this Panel from five different backgrounds of interest and activity, and at first we had as many approaches to the topic. We have also had the advantage of fruitful consultations with a number of responsible and knowledgeable men, both with respect to the technical facts and with respect to the political background, and much of our thought has been affected by these consultations, though none of those with whom we consulted can be held responsible for the views expressed here. The members of the Panel have worked together now for many months, and what has emerged and is here recorded is a general view which no one of us held before. This we now respectfully submit to you. . . .

(Signed)

Vannevar Bush  
John S. Dickey  
Allen W. Dulles  
Joseph E. Johnson

Robert Oppenheimer, Chairman

Part I: The Difficulties of Arms Regulation<sup>1</sup>

The international limitation of armaments is a goal of policy which it is singularly difficult to reach—at least on terms that are compatible with national safety. Obviously it is always possible to disarm oneself—a nation can always abandon its defenses by its own free decision. But it is quite another matter to secure an international understanding such that it becomes possible to limit armed forces without endangering the stability of policy and the very safety of the nation. The record of American efforts to get arms regulation—and indeed the whole history of international negotiations on armaments in recent decades—makes these points very clear.

AJW?

What makes this difficulty important is that the goal itself is so desirable. For a very long time men of sense and vision have dreamed of beating swords into plowshares, and in recent generations, as the world's weapons have increased in destructiveness, this dream has become steadily more insistent. The climax has come with the development of atomic weapons, and we may take as a symbol of the urgency of the desire for arms regulation the fact that the American presentation of this subject to the United Nations opened with the words, "We are here to make a choice between the quick and the dead."

Yet the very effort which was formally launched with these words is perhaps the best single illustration of the difficulties of arms regulation. The proposals of the United States were the result of the most searching study, and they were presented with genuine good will in a major attempt to bring a terrifying new force under international control, even at a time when the United States had a monopoly of atomic weapons. But in all the debate and discourse which has followed on Mr. Baruch's opening speech there has never been any real sign that agreement was remotely likely. There has not even been any genuine negotiation. The representatives of the Soviet Union have increasingly used this subject and this forum as opportunities for propaganda, and as its hopes of a genuine negotiation have faded, the United States has sometimes seemed to follow suit. . . .

There can be little doubt that the principal cause of difficulty, here as in so many other places in the postwar world, has been the nature of Soviet politics and the behavior of Soviet representatives. Over and over again, in the discussions of arms regulation as elsewhere, it has been demonstrated that the Soviet concept of negotiation in good faith is entirely different from that which is followed, or at least honored, in the West. The general record of the Soviet Union in diplomacy is one in which the meaning of words has been distorted, the privacy of discussions violated, and trust repaid by trickery. And these are only the surface manifestations of a system of power and behavior which seems deeply hostile to the whole concept of human liberty, and to the United States and its government in particular. It seems clear that this hostility now involves such devices as the Iron Curtain, which in and of itself

1. Though we were appointed as Consultants on Disarmament, we have found that this word is in many contexts too sweeping, and we have preferred to speak of the regulation or limitation of armaments.



constitutes a block to any real discussion of arms regulation, since there can be no confidence in any agreement if there is not some way of finding out at least in general terms whether it is being kept. And it may be that it is inconceivable to Soviet leaders that there should be such a thing as a common interest in limiting an arms race; their hostility may be so deeply rooted that they simply cannot understand the idea that agreement might be of benefit to both sides. But it is not necessary to press these speculations further. It is clear beyond the need for argument that Soviet behavior has been a major obstacle to the international regulation of armaments.

Soviet intransigence has been paralleled by developing changes in United States policy which have also had a limiting effect on the discussions in the United Nations. These developments are themselves in the main an indirect product of Soviet behavior. In the years since 1946 it has become apparent that the West has a need for substantial rearmament. In the context of a major international effort to develop strength it is not easy to give serious attention to discussions of arms regulation, and it seems clear that its concern for the uninterrupted development of its own strength has reinforced the United States in a growing reluctance to put much faith in discussions already frustrated by the acts of Soviet representatives. These general obstacles to serious discussion received a weighty and concrete addition in the outbreak of war in Korea. So for different but compelling reasons both great Powers have in separate ways contributed to a situation in which the discussions in the United Nations have ceased to have any relevance to arms regulation as a real goal of policy.

The experience of recent years seems to indicate plainly that it is hard to make progress in the limitation of armaments when there is a high level of tension in the international political situation. . . .

[T]he differences between the free world and the Soviet Union are so deep-seated that no genuine, large-scale political settlement seems likely within the present generation. Even if present tensions should eventually decrease, there would remain divergences too deep for trust or friendship. If anything has been made plain since 1945, it is that the world in which the United States finds itself is one in which there also exists a great and hostile power system. Policies that cannot survive in such a world must be discarded.

The argument thus far strongly implies that no real progress is at present likely in the field of arms regulation. This is our own view—and we think it has been increasingly the view of the American government. . . . What we now have, increasingly, in the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations is not a genuine discussion of arms regulation but a propaganda contest.

The regulation of armaments, then, is very difficult—and for the moment at least it seems impossible. In the pattern of policy which can be built on this general view there is a clarity which makes it relatively easy to proceed to decision and action, at least in the field of armaments. What is needed, it would seem, is a level of armed strength which will permit the free world to deter or if attacked to defeat the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately the argument cannot safely be ended here. Even though no arms regulation is now possible, there are factors in the present arms race which have a

meaning so large and pressing that arms policy cannot safely be based on the simple assumption that the one object is to "get ahead of" the Soviet Union. Our situation is much more difficult than that. Modern armaments are at once urgently necessary and extraordinarily dangerous, and wise policy must constantly be aware of both the need and the danger. This means that the notion of arms regulation, however little it may have a direct present application, should not be put permanently out of mind. And even for present policy, a view of armaments which gives full weight to their danger as well as their necessity has considerable implications. So we turn, in Part II, to the considerations which indicate that the present arms race has a special meaning and danger.

### *Part II: The Character of the Atomic Arms Race*

In assessing the character of the present arms race we have learned most by considering the contest in atomic weapons. This contest appears to have three properties which in combination give it special meaning such that the atomic arms race is now a political fact in its own right. First, it is a race in which unprecedented destructive power is accumulating, probably on both sides, at a quite phenomenal rate. Second, this new order of destructive power has the effect of putting both the heart of the Soviet Union and the heart of the United States into the front line of any major military contest. Third, the United States is heavily committed to a swift and almost unlimited use of atomic retaliation in the event of major Soviet aggression. Each of these properties deserves examination.

#### A. THE RATE OF PRODUCTION

Although it is no secret that both the United States and the USSR are engaged in the production of atomic bombs, and although it is impossible for any serious student to be ignorant of the fact that atomic bombs are instruments of a wholly new order of destructive power, the special character of the race in atomic weapons is not well understood. Just because the atom is so dangerous men have hesitated to think hard about it. The very high level of security surrounding some of the most important facts of atomic weapons has operated to reduce the quantity and quality of responsible discussion. This has been true almost as much within the government as outside it, since responsible officials are among the first to avoid any hint of trespassing upon restricted ground. It therefore seems a necessary part of this Report that there should be included here a sober statement of the central facts of the atomic arms race as they are known to those who are fully informed in the American government.

Unfortunately there is little direct information about Russian atomic operations. The Russians are known to have exploded three bombs; at least two, the first and third, were of good efficiency, having a design like American models of 1945 and 1948; these bombs are known to have contained plutonium and uranium-235, so that it may be assumed that the USSR has supplies of both these substances. It is likely that the Russian production of plutonium is more than a hundred kilograms a year. From this sort of information it is not possible to make any close estimate of Soviet



atomic strength. But while it would be helpful to know just how much fissionable material the Soviet Union now has, there is much to be learned from considering the general nature of atomic development, and here we can readily learn from the American experience.

It is now just a little over seven years since the first atomic explosion occurred, in July 1945. In that first year only a handful of bombs was available, and for four years thereafter the United States made no great effort to increase its facilities for the production of fissionable materials; important efforts to expand our facilities began only in 1949, after the first explosion in the Soviet Union. The amount of fissionable material on hand is steadily increasing so that, in event of hostilities, there would be available atomic bombs of many sizes, deliverable by a variety of carriers, the total of their effect having a destructive power thousands of times the destructive power loosed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1949 there have been launched four successive programs of expansion of fissionable material production capacity; production will continue to increase rapidly through the next decade.

This increase in the stockpile of fissionable material does not mean either a proportional increase in the number of weapons nor a proportional increase in the destructive power on hand. Three distinct factors bring this about:

1. Constant improvement of atomic weapon design,
2. Variable requirements for military use, and
3. Development of thermonuclear weapons.

Improved design of atomic weapons makes it possible to derive greater destructive power from a given quantity of fissionable material or conversely to achieve a given destructive effect from a smaller quantity of fissionable material. At the same time, military planning requires the stock of atomic weapons to be distributed at many locations, for delivery in a number of sizes varying from atomic artillery to bombs to be used in long range bombers. Destructive power per weapon is similarly a variable, subject to military planning. The development of thermonuclear weapons tends to increase considerably the available destructive power of our stockpile without an increase in the number of atomic weapons.

All the elements to date in the atomic weapons field heavily underline this conclusion: the atomic bomb is not simply the most powerful weapon in history; it also seems to have the characteristic that the amount of destructive power available from each pound of fissionable material on hand at any one time tends to multiply at a quite extraordinary rate.

There is nothing in this pattern of development which is necessarily peculiar to the United States; a similar pattern is by no means unlikely in the case of the Soviet Union, since the possibility of rapid development is inherent in the nature of atomic technology.

1. It is important to understand the limits of the meaning which should be attached to figures about atomic stockpiles as used in the Report. Since atomic weapons can be made in widely different sizes and since a given amount of fissionable material can be used to make a few big bombs or many smaller ones, no one precise figure for the number of bombs that can be put together at any time has much meaning.

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Fissionable material does not wear out, and the process of producing it almost inevitably leads to technical improvements which increase the rate of production. There is no permanently important shortage of raw materials for any great Power. Compared to other military items, moreover, atomic bombs are cheap. The Soviet Union started later than the United States, and her effort is probably smaller in scale, so that she may never have as many bombs as the United States at any given time, but she can easily have as many at any time as the United States had a few years previously. This means that the time when the Russians will have the material to make 1000 atomic bombs may well be only a few years away and the time when they have enough to make 5000 only a few years further on. Any sensible forecast must assume that within our time Soviet atomic weapons may be numbered in five figures. The Russians may not have so large a stockpile so soon—but it is also possible that they have it sooner. On the subject of Soviet work in the thermonuclear field we know nothing of any real value, but it would be the height of folly not to expect that in time the Soviet Union will learn what we have learned.<sup>2</sup>

There is much debate in the United States Government currently as to what number of atomic bombs delivered on the target is enough to cause the destruction of a large modern industrial society beyond the hope of recovery. In such discussions much depends on what is meant by destruction; a society may still have military strength, for example, at a time when it is already dead for most purposes. Some students guess that for the United States a few hundred bombs on target would be enough; others think that by careful planning and preparation we could survive up to 2500. In the case of this latter estimate, the term "survival" must have a rather specialized meaning; 2500 atomic bombs of presently known Soviet design would have an explosive energy equal to that of 100 million tons of high explosive—or 400 times the total load dropped on Germany by allied bombers in World War II. *[This calculation is not right. The easiest way to correct it would be to substitute 40 for 400. Whether the error was made by the Panel, its secretary, or the sanitizers is not clear. In any case the subsequent evolution of Soviet explosive power has made the calculation too small by orders of magnitude. McG.B.]*

There is one important limitation upon those overwhelming and entirely possible figures. When atomic bombs are numbered in the thousands it is no longer the number of atomic weapons, but the effectiveness of the instruments of delivery which is the primary limitation upon the scale of the damage which can be done to an enemy, and it is just this fact which makes it important not to jump to the hasty conclusion that because the atomic stockpiles are rapidly multiplying, there can be no defense against an eventual annihilating attack. As atomic bombs increase in number, each additional weapon becomes increasingly cheap and easy to get, until in one sense it becomes possible to think of atomic bombs as just another and better kind of ammunition. But it is quite another matter to develop a military force capable

2. In this discussion of the future we have somewhat discounted the possibility that the Soviet Union might as a matter of policy desist from continuous development in the field of atomic weapons.



of ensuring the delivery of massive numbers of bombs. For while bombs are tending to become cheaper, all experience indicates that aircraft to carry them are steadily growing more expensive, and effective guided missiles of long range seem likely to be at least equally costly. Modern aircraft, moreover, have a very high rate of obsolescence, and the job of maintaining a capability once developed can be formidable when the plane on which it is based is outmatched by defensive developments.

So it is important to observe that beyond a certain point the problem of delivery tends to become more important than the problems of development and production. This point has probably already been reached in the United States. This general characteristic of atomic armaments is of high importance, because it means that the constantly expanding stockpiles cannot in and of themselves bring catastrophe. It will be necessary for those who wish to have a full use of their atomic ammunition to spend great efforts on carriers of one sort or another, and it will be possible to attempt a defense against such carriers. There are some students, we know, and some high officers of the government, who do not believe that there can ever be any worthwhile defense against atomic attack. Others sharply disagree, and this matter urgently needs authoritative settlement. . . .

Important and valuable as air defense may be, however, it will be a pleasant surprise if the defense is ever able to knock down or deflect as many as four out of five of the attackers, and at present we should be lucky to get one in five. When these figures are combined with the estimates given above of the number of bombs on target that are needed for a knockout blow, some painful conclusions emerge. Even a combination of the most optimistic assessments leads to the theoretical conclusion that, if she is willing and able to build a sufficient strategic air force, the Soviet Union may be able to destroy our economy beyond the hope of recovery when she has 15,000 atomic bombs, while she might well have this ability when she has as few as 600. The lower figure might be reached in a few years, and the upper is not out of reach within the next two decades.

When any great power has achieved a five figure stockpile of atomic weapons, moreover, it will probably have placed itself in such a position that its basic destructive power cannot be destroyed by any single surprise attack by any enemy. The mechanics of a mass surprise assault are singularly complex, and large stockpiles can be widely dispersed—especially as smaller aircraft become capable of delivering atomic bombs. If the atomic arms race continues, therefore, we seem likely to have within a relatively few years a situation in which the two great powers will each have a clear-cut capacity to do very great damage to the other, while each will be unable to exert that capacity except at the gravest risk of receiving similar terrible blows in return. And this situation is likely to be largely unaffected by the fact that one side may always have many more weapons than the other. There is likely to be a point in our time when the Soviet Union will have "enough" bombs—no matter how many more we ourselves may have. *(Later than the expected.)*

Were it not for the fact that it is so near and so plainly important, the topic of the probable behavior of men and nations in such a situation might well be avoided on the ground that it defies an answer. Whatever else may be said of it, it is plainly

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unprecedented. The power which will exist is not the power to win an ordinary military victory. It is rather the power to end a civilization and a very large number of the people in it.

It is conceivable that a world of this kind may enjoy a strange stability arising from general understanding that it would be suicidal to "throw the switch." On the other hand it also seems possible that a world so dangerous may not be very calm, and to maintain peace it will be necessary for statesmen to decide against rash actions not just once, but every time. In particular, since the coming of such a world will be gradual and since its coming may or may not be correctly estimated in all countries, there is a possibility that one nation or another may be tempted to launch a preventive war "before it is too late," only to find out that the time for such a blow has already passed. No one can be sure what will happen, but this much seems evident: the prospect is one which makes it clear that the present contest in atomic weapons is highly relevant to our national policy.

#### B. THE NEW PROXIMITY OF THE U.S. AND THE USSR

The power and rapid growth of atomic stockpiles affects the safety of the great powers in a peculiar and extraordinarily significant way. The atomic weapon is more than just a great addition to their strength at the boundaries where their other interests conflict (though in Europe at least it is this, too). It is also an instrument which brings the two great powers into the direct range of each other in a way which no other weapon at present permits; in this sense atomic weapons and modern aircraft in combination have revolutionized the geography of contemporary warfare.

The first rule of strategy, after all, is to concentrate force at a decisive point. In former times this meant that the proper center of attention was the enemy's army, not his capital or his treasure house. But today it means that the right target is the industrial and social base of the enemy's power—because today as never before this industrial and social base can in fact be destroyed. This is not to say that armies are now negligible, or even that atomic weapons will be used only in massive blows at the industrial cores of Russia and the United States. It is only to emphasize that the cities and people of these two great subcontinents are now in the front lines, with a certainty and finality that must not be obscured by any feeling that nothing so much like comic-strip fantasy can possibly be true.

This change is of great importance. The usual pattern of military conflict between great rival power systems is one in which the blows are struck at the margins where their territories meet. Thus the age-long contest between Islam and Western Christianity ebbed and flowed over great ranges of territory, and only very rarely was there combat near the center of either power system. Now the two great Powers find themselves strategic neighbors, and their rapidly increasing atomic strength makes this new nearness a major matter. It is not necessary here to attempt any assessment of its whole meaning; it is enough to note simply that it is the contest in modern weapons which has had this effect, and that for both Powers it is an effect of great political importance. . . .

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### C. THE CHARACTER OF AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF ATOMIC WEAPONS

In the decade since it embarked upon its first efforts to produce an atomic weapon, the United States Government has faced a series of decisions as to the way in which it would deal with the military uses of atomic energy. The cumulative effect of these decisions has been to create a situation in which it is increasingly possible that there may be an unlimited use of weapons of almost unlimited destructive power.

The first great decision, of course, was the decision to try to develop a weapon; this decision was taken in wartime, and in the shadow of the possibility that the Nazis might be well ahead in their development of such weapons. From this decision there came atomic weapons. A similar decision, from a similar concern, was reached in 1950 when the Government began its intensive effort to develop thermonuclear weapons. Then it was the tension of a "cold war" and the gnawing fear that the Russians might be ahead of us which were decisive. From this decision we are getting hydrogen bombs.

Having developed something which looked as if it would have military value, the United States was faced in 1945 with the question whether it would use its new weapon. Taking the position that the fundamental wickedness is war and not weapons, the American government determined in 1945 that it would use the new weapon to complete its victory over Japan; it has been a constant part of American policy since that time that in the event of an act of aggression, the American government would feel free to use atomic weapons.

The third element in the American position on atomic weapons has been the determination of the United States to retain in its own hands the authority to determine whether, where, and how it proposes to use its atomic bomb. The atomic bomb is thus treated differently from other weapons. Both in Korea and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the military effort of the United States is combined with that of other nations and operated under the authority of agencies that include many other countries among their active members. Especially in the case of the defense of Europe, it is evident that the considerations which govern allied decisions are not those of any one nation but those which are worked out together in the councils of a great coalition. The one military element of the defense of Europe for which this is not true is the atomic bomb.

A fourth American decision, reached only gradually, and at least partly in response to Russian development, has been the decision to proceed toward the production of as large a stockpile as is practicable, as rapidly as possible. At first it was supposed that a few atomic weapons would be decisive in any future war, and that any large stockpile would be unnecessary. But closer study indicated the unreality of this view, and in recent years it has increasingly been felt that there is almost no limit to the number of bombs which would be desirable. Production is now being widely expanded, and further large expansions appear likely.

Fifth, the United States not only maintains a right to use atomic bombs, but does in fact now plan to use them in the event of a major war, and this plan is not at present dependent upon the prior use of such weapons by any possible aggressor.

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"How much is enough?"  
"There is no enough - no limit."

It is true that there is some lack of clarity in the intentions of the United States in the Far East, and it appears to us that the problem of determining the place of atomic weapons in policy toward that part of the world has been very incompletely examined by the American government. But in Europe the commitment to atomic weapons is clear-cut, and it seems reasonably plain that if any conflict anywhere should develop in such a fashion that both the United States and the Soviet Union became heavily engaged, the United States will use atomic weapons. Indeed, such is the present state of American weapons and military capabilities that no other course would seem possible.

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Finally, it is at present probable that the atomic tactics of the United States in any major war would involve an immediate and overpowering strategic blow designed to put as many atomic bombs as possible on strategic targets within the homeland of the enemy country. It seems likely that once the switch is thrown, the American Strategic Air Command will be ordered to act with utmost speed to destroy the war-making power of the Soviet Union. Practical considerations seem to indicate that if such an attack is to have its best chance of effectiveness, it must be conducted with great rapidity and with a maximum concentration of force. In such planning there cannot be any abatement of the attack for political or other considerations, and there can hardly be any selection of targets on other than a strictly military basis; the presence or absence of people becomes irrelevant, except as they are producers and therefore military targets. The object of the attack is to "saturate" the defense, and the whole concept seems closely connected with a sense that defense against this kind of warfare—for us as for the enemy—is now not really possible.

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This, then, is the pattern of the development of American policy toward atomic weapons in the last decade. Since the initial decision to develop such a weapon the United States has decided to use it, to keep its control wholly unshared, to make as many as possible, to plan for their use, and to base that plan centrally on the concept of an immediate and devastating strategic blow at the center of hostile power. The decision to conduct this operation would at present be uniquely American, and it now has the first claim upon the supply of atomic weapons. . . .

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### Part III: Conclusions and Recommendations

The discussion in Part II makes it plain that the present arms race contains real dangers and has high political importance. The unprecedented contest in the development and production of super weapons, the new nearness of the USSR and the USA, and the rigid commitment of American policy to a heavy dependence upon atomic weapons—these three elements in combination give most persuasive reasons for wishing that there were some way to get these weapons under control. A good look at the facts, in other words, substantiates and underlines the natural view that a world made safe from atomic weapons would be a good thing if we could get it.

Fundamentally, and in the long run, the problem which is posed by the release of atomic energy is a problem of the ability of the human race to govern itself without war. There is no permanent method of excising atomic energy from our affairs, now

and absent of that: without too much, FU plans, drops,  
or threats!

BREAK DEADLY CONNECTION!



that men know how it can be released. Even if some reasonably complete international control of atomic energy should be established, knowledge would persist, and it is hard to see how there could be any major war in which one side or another would not eventually make and use atomic bombs. In this respect the problem of armaments was permanently and drastically altered in 1945.

In 1947 Colonel Stimson wrote that "Lasting peace and freedom cannot be achieved until the world finds a way toward the necessary government of the whole. . . . The given atom, uncontrolled, can be only a growing menace to us all. . . ." Institutions that lead to a growth of international community have a special importance and value when a proper weight is given to the meaning of the atom. But there cannot be any institutional guarantee of world peace until the whole pattern of present dangers and tension has been drastically modified. The United States cannot deal with the present Soviet threat and the present weaknesses of the free world by wishing them out of existence. So while we recognize the long-term significance of the ideal of community, and while we are convinced that it is possible to conduct our policy with due regard to this continuing objective, we are persuaded that present policy toward armament must also be governed by nearer considerations.

One path toward a lawful community, and a path with urgent relevance to armaments, is of course the notion of international arms regulation. This Panel has not easily abandoned the effort to find some way in which serious negotiations looking toward a regulation of armaments might now be undertaken. Such a way may exist, but we have not been able to find it. Over and over again we have moved in unhappy concern from our sense of the dangerous arms race to our sense of Soviet intransigence, and we have never been able to find any proposal or set of proposals which did not appear to be either dangerous for us, in the position in which we now find ourselves, or unacceptable to the Soviet Union.

Many of the difficulties which occur in any such enquiry have been recounted in a sketchy way in Part I of this report. Most of them turn upon the character and behavior of the Soviet Government. Perhaps the central and most serious obstacle has been the strong likelihood that the Soviet Union simply does not have any interest in a settlement except on terms that would be ruinous for the United States. And this indifference appears to be connected to two attitudes which deeply connect with the requirements for any agreed regulation of armaments. First, the concepts of isolation and secrecy, symbolized in the Iron Curtain, appear to be not simply an accidental external manifestation, but rather a central and sustaining pillar of the whole system of Soviet power. Second, it seems all too likely that in the Soviet mind there is no room for the notion that there can be difficulties and dangers common to both the Soviet and the non-Soviet world. Yet without some access through the Iron Curtain, and without some sense that there is mutual advantage in settlement, there can hardly be any prospect of an agreed limitation of the arms race.

In addition to the peculiar difficulties of the Soviet Union, we must bear in mind what may be called the normal difficulties of any regulation of armaments. Two in particular are worth recalling—the complexity which seems to develop in any effort to arrange for a balanced and acceptable international limitation, and the connection

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which inescapably ties problems of armaments to general questions of international politics. We think that perhaps the problem of complexity is not wholly unmanageable; while written instruments might well be impracticable, it is not impossible for friendly nations to accomplish similar results simply by a series of interlocking actions that are not formally embodied in a treaty. Between friendly states this kind of *détente* has often occurred.

In this connection, we are persuaded that the specific objections raised against the present United Nations Atomic Energy Plan by the Soviet Union should not be counted among the really serious obstacles to arms limitation. That plan has had great merit, and we do not think it would be wise now to attempt to modify it by new proposals in the United Nations; but it is not the only conceivable way of dealing with the problem, and it is perhaps not even the most appropriate method in the present world, with present problems of armaments.<sup>1</sup>

But if it is possible to conceive of ways in which one could deal with the problem of complexity, it is not easy to be so hopeful about the prospects for a level of political understanding which might permit a sustained agreement on the limitation of armaments. The contest between the Soviet Union and the non-Soviet world has produced tensions and unsettled major problems in almost every continent. There are situations which are unacceptable, in the long run, to one side or the other, and sometimes to both. Nor are these merely points of political disagreement. There is fighting in Malaya, organized conflict in Indo-China, and open war in Korea. The Korean war, moreover, involves the United States in an area of high strategic concern, while at the same time it engages the prestige and honor of the United Nations as a whole. A pattern of international tension which includes an open war is not one in which it is easy to suppose that a political platform for arms regulation can readily be established.

We seem to be left with three general propositions which are hard to reconcile with one another. First, no regulation of armaments, however limited, has ever proved feasible except as part of some genuine political settlement; in the present situation, atomic stockpiles are a central part of the American strategy of defense, and it seems impossible that they should be regulated without other major adjustments both in armaments and in the general balance of international relations. Second, most sorts of understanding with the Kremlin are now either unobtainable or unacceptable or both; even if peaceful coexistence is possible, it cannot be comfortable or cordial, and it certainly seems unlikely to involve anything that could be called a general settlement, for some time to come. Third, unless the contest in atomic armaments is in some way moderated, our whole society will come increasingly into peril of the gravest kind. The task of framing and pursuing a national policy which is solidly based on all three of these propositions cannot be easy.

Simply stated, the difficulty we face is that we must deal with both the Soviet Union and the arms race. In recent years, American policy has been heavily preoc-

1. In Annex I we append a short discussion of some of the general considerations which lead us to believe that a rather different sort of scheme may now be appropriate.



cupied with the Soviet danger, and most of our actions have been responses to Soviet actions and threats. In particular our policy toward atomic weapons has been hardened and sharpened in the contest with the Soviet Union until there is now in our posture a rigidity and totality of commitment which seem very dangerous. In one sense, of course, the whole contest in weapons is primarily a result of Soviet behavior. But it is important to conduct this contest on terms that preserve our own freedom of action and give proper weight to the transcendent dangers of the weapons themselves. The analysis in Part II of our position on atomic weapons shows that new measures are needed if we are to attain the flexibility which is essential to any effort to play an active and not a passive role in these affairs.

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Flexibility—freedom of action—seems to us, indeed, to be the first basic requirement for American policy in the present situation. It would be very easy for this nation, in the face of the double dangers of Soviet totalitarianism and atomic war, to let events develop so that in the end a catastrophe of some sort becomes unavoidable.

The meaning of freedom of action may perhaps be sharpened by considering its relevance in a range of policy wider than that of armaments alone. The great constructive steps of American policy in recent years, in the European Recovery Program, in NATO, and in the reconstruction of Japan, have aimed to restore the freedom of action of the free nations, to regain the initiative, and to create a situation in which the non-communist world is sufficiently strong and united to be able to go about the works of freedom in peace.

This attempt to regain the initiative through a policy of collective action and effort seems highly relevant to the problems and dangers of the arms race itself. One of the great hopeful possibilities of the present lies in the development by every available means of the social and political coherence of all the non-communist nations. More specifically, the strengthening of the ties that connect the non-Soviet world is one of the great lines of policy which may be helpful in reducing the dangers of a world full of atomic weapons. Decisions about armaments should be closely related to this objective, which often has requirements more subtle than those of a purely military estimate.<sup>2</sup>

In the field of armaments, quite obviously, there can be no complete freedom of action. It is always within the power of the enemy to impose upon us a heavy level of effort and a sustained emphasis upon armed strength. What is not inevitable is a rigid commitment to a specific form of military action. It is important to understand that an arms race is not something either black or white—either totally unlimited or firmly regulated by international treaties. The problem of arms policy is to develop the kind of strength which may be needed to reduce the Soviet danger while at the same time keeping to a minimum the danger of a catastrophic resort to atomic weapons on both sides. In such an effort there are useful steps which fall far short of a treaty of arms regulation. Any development which gives us freedom to reduce

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2. While it seems to us plain that the development of the Atlantic Community is of the highest importance, we think it equally clear that it is urgent—though no doubt difficult—to develop appropriate lines of connection and joint action in other parts of the world.

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*yes*

our own commitment to the use of atomic weapons will tend to decrease the possibility of an atomic war. So too will measures which combine a defensive character with a deterrent effect upon the Soviet Union. For it is always possible that a real decrease in the sharpness of the arms race itself might be achieved by acts and not by treaties.

Even negotiation, which seems so remote, so unmanageable at present and unlikely in the immediate future, is not to be wholly dismissed. The dangers of the arms race are at least as great for the Soviet Union as they are for the United States, and the passage of time may well increase the pressure on the Kremlin for serious consideration of alternatives to its present policy. It would be unwise to neglect the possibility that negotiation may become feasible in the reasonably near future. It seems important that American policy should not permit the continuance of a situation in which our own rigidities would inhibit us from creating an opportunity to negotiate.

The problem of policy toward armaments, in short, is at present centrally a problem of increasing the freedom of action of the American Government. The recommendations which follow suggest certain changes in policy and posture which would in our view begin to increase the flexibility of our policy toward armaments. They offer ways in which we can make it less likely that the result of the present crisis will be an all-out atomic war. Taken together they will sensibly increase the chance of finding a way toward a real moderation of the present contest, and they may somewhat increase the currently slender chance of a genuine settlement and a comprehensive regulation of armaments.

Important as these objectives are, however, we would not present these recommendations if we were not persuaded that they serve a broader purpose as well. The whole of our analysis has made it clear to us that the dangers of the arms race cannot be separated from the reality of the Soviet threat and the need for collective strength in the free world. What persuades us of the soundness of our recommendations is that they seem serviceable and indeed highly desirable when considered in this broader framework of our principal national purposes, and when measured against the deepest traits of our national tradition.

The five recommendations which follow are not intended to be exhaustive or even very systematic. Yet in various ways they relate to those aspects of the problem which seem to us most important. . . .

#### 1. CANDOR TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE

We think it of critical importance in the development of a national policy which takes full account of the realities of the arms race, that the United States Government should adopt a policy of candor toward the American people—and at least equally toward its own elected representatives and responsible officials—in presenting the meaning of the arms race. The best and wisest government, in this country, is always dependent in large measure upon the support of the American people, and this support, if it is to have the strength and solidity which are necessary in great affairs, must rest upon an adequate basic understanding of the realities of the situation. What

*JFK rejected (proposed?)*

*61-62*



is true of the people as a whole is true also of large numbers of officials who staff the government at levels below the highest and whose activities have much to do with the execution of policies determined at the top.

The central fact on which this Report is based is one of which the American people and most of their government are not responsibly aware. It is that the American stockpile of atomic weapons has been increasing rapidly for the past seven years and is likely to multiply at least as rapidly in the immediate future. The pattern of atomic development is such that what is true for the United States can well be true, in essence, for the Soviet Union. Within the time span of current planning the Soviet Union may have many hundred atomic bombs; within ten or fifteen years she could have several thousand.<sup>3</sup> This prospect is necessarily one of very great danger.

We believe that the American government and people are at present very far from showing a responsible awareness of this danger, and accordingly we believe that it is a matter of urgency that such awareness should become much more widespread. The only way we know of to accomplish this task is for those who are fully informed on the subject of atomic energy to take the rest of the government and the people into their confidence by a straightforward statement of the size and shape of the growing destructive power of atomic weapons. Such a statement should include an effectively informative account of the quantities and rates of increase which are involved. We believe, in short, that it is essential for the American Government and people to know the basic meaning of the atomic arms race.

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We think it difficult to overestimate the importance of such an act of candor. It has been our experience that without a direct and informed understanding of the rates of atomic development, most men are reluctant to give full value to warnings which they hear from others. The more responsible the citizen, indeed, the more he is likely not to pay full attention to the problem of atomic weapons as long as present security restrictions are enforced. A man who is in the habit of trying to think in rational terms will naturally hesitate to attempt a judgment on any matter on which he knows himself to lack important information; he will tend to leave the problem to those who know the facts.

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In addition to providing the facts and figures, the United States Government should direct public attention specifically and repeatedly to the fact that the atomic bomb works both ways. The official position of the United States toward the Russian atomic bomb has been that this development is simply something we expected and planned for. This position may well have been desirable at the time of the first Soviet explosion, in order to prevent a possible reaction of hysteria. But three years have passed; the present danger is not of hysteria but of complacency. Official comment on atomic energy has tended to emphasize the importance of the atomic bomb as part of the American arsenal. There is an altogether insufficient emphasis upon its importance as a Soviet weapon, and upon the fact that no matter how many bombs we may be

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3. We should repeat our warning that estimates of numbers of bombs can be no more than rough indicators of the level of atomic armament; but in any case the actual quantities are not nearly as important as the fact that they are bound to multiply in time.

making, the Soviet Union may fairly soon have enough to threaten the destruction of our whole society. In these matters, there is no substitute for authoritative official warnings. It is well known that this is a topic surrounded by secrecy, and the only voice which has full authority is that which comes from high in the government.

We believe, then, that the United States government should tell the story of the atomic danger, and in particular we believe that it should explain the rate and impact of atomic production, that it should emphasize the growing capability of the Soviet Union, and that it should direct attention to the fact that beyond a certain point we cannot ward off the Soviet threat merely by "keeping ahead of the Russians." We believe that official disclosure and recognition of these realities is the basic condition for a sound national attitude toward the problems of the atomic arms race.

Objections to this course usually rest on two basic arguments. The first is that if the American people learn of their peril, they may either lose heart in the struggle to stand firm against Soviet expansionism or perhaps go overboard in favor of a preventive war. The second is that it would be folly to let the Soviet Union know either our level of atomic armament or the character of our fear of atomic attack. We are not persuaded by either of these contentions. We are wholly persuaded that this country does better when it knows the truth, and we would not want to be in the shoes of a government which had to deal with a nation which awoke to reality after a long period of concealment and deception. And while we are not sure it would be good to keep our proper fears a secret from the Soviet Union, we are sure that it cannot be done. This is the sort of country which has no way of concealing its basic concerns from foreigners except by concealing them from its own people, and in matters of this kind that price is much too high. As for our supply of atomic weapons, we think it is now fully large enough to make it highly desirable that Soviet leaders should be left in no doubt about it. The extreme secrecy which now shrouds this matter seems to us a plainly obsolete remainder from the days when there were very few bombs indeed and it was important not to have our weakness known. There are many things about atomic energy which it is highly important to keep secret as long as we can, but the general size of our supply of atomic weapons is no longer one of them.

Just as our own inquiry has been based throughout on a sense of the central importance of the realities of the atomic contest, so we think that there can be no appropriate adjustment of American policy until those realities are brought home to the American government and people. As long as the truth of the atomic arms race is buried in a very few informed minds (and often pushed back out of daily consideration even by those who know the truth), there is no possibility of framing policy in such a fashion as to take due account of the national danger. American foreign policy rests upon two great internal forces; one is the power of public opinion, and the other is the interplay of energies in a large and sprawling government of checks, balances, offices, and men. At present both of these great forces, in very large measure, are governed by a basically insufficient assessment of the realities of the world in which we live. It is bad enough to be in a very dangerous world; it is still worse to be unaware of the danger.

We believe that nothing else is possible, in all that bears upon decreasing the

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in Europe and elsewhere: ~~know~~, NO CANDOR.

(Part of the secret danger of the situation;  
as is, public ignorance of all this!)

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national peril, until the government and the people are accurately informed. In the end, it is the province of the nation to make its own foreign policy, and we are not among those who believe that we are necessarily wiser than the people and government of the United States, when they are truly informed. The analysis which we have attempted rests on our own conviction that the danger of the atomic arms race is great and growing. Other and better conclusions may be reached by others, starting from a similar awareness of danger; we hope that this may be the case. It is precisely because we respect the power and judgment of our government and people that we so strenuously object to a situation in which all Americans except a handful of overworked and harried officials are deprived of basic information which is not worth keeping secret.

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## 2. ATOMIC ARMAMENTS AND THE UNITY OF THE FREE WORLD

We think it is urgently important that the American Government should undertake to bring its policy toward atomic weapons into harmony with its policies for the development of a lasting community of free nations.

We have already stated our conviction that it must be a major objective of American policy to increase by all available means the sense of community of the non-Soviet world. Undertakings and institutional developments which serve this end are among the indispensable safeguards against the outbreak of war; if the free world weakens, the danger of atomic weapons must increase, and the reverse is also true. In a general sense, therefore, any contribution to the strength and unity of the free world is likely to be helpful in reducing the danger of atomic armaments.

But just as the successful pursuit of national policies in the United States demands a relationship of trust and candor between the government and the people, so in the affairs of the non-Soviet world there can be no real mutual security without mutual confidence. At present there is danger that a failure to reach some common understanding on matters of atomic policy will gravely weaken the mutual confidence of the major free nations.

We think it is time for the whole problem of the use of atomic weapons to be shared in considerable measure with the major nations with which we are allied.<sup>4</sup> The military importance of such trust is almost self-evident and has recently been emphasized by General Bradley, but we think there is also great political value to be gained from spreading the responsibility for judgment on these matters.

No small part of the uncertainty which surrounds the field of atomic weapons derives from a widespread feeling that the United States is clutching the atom to its bosom and may at any moment get angry and hurl it in the general direction of the Kremlin. This feeling, in our view, is quite unjustified, and in fact the United States government has constantly given important weight to the fears and feelings of its allies. But the appearance of aloofness has been maintained, and this appearance

4. This recommendation does *not* relate to the special problem of technical collaboration on the making of atomic weapons.

does no good and much harm. The balance of feeling of the free world would be improved if it were generally understood that the United States considers the use of atomic bombs to be a legitimate area of allied discussion.

We also think that if the major allies of the United States can be given a sense of shared responsibility, their understanding of the weapon and its political meaning may be improved. The course of the atomic arms race has much meaning for Europe—there is high significance both in the increasing role of atomic weapons in the defense of Western Europe and in the increasing danger which arises from European vulnerability to Soviet atomic bombs. If the major countries of the Atlantic community approach these dangerous questions separately, it is hard to see how they can avoid serious misunderstandings which can only increase their difficulties. A somewhat different but important difficulty could also arise with some urgency in connection with the Far East. It may be hard to get general agreement on these matters, but clearly some candor in discussion and some common responsibility in planning are essential first steps.

In urging a higher level of inter-allied communication on the problems of the atomic arms race, we are certainly not suggesting that the United States Government should tie its own hands and surrender the right to decide for itself, in an emergency, whether and how it will use its atomic weapons. No allied connection need have this effect. What we are urging is rather that all the allied states stand to gain if they can reach a common appreciation of the character of the problem. If this is to be done, the first condition is that they be reasonably frank with each other.

### 3. AMERICAN CONTINENTAL DEFENSE

#### 4. DISENGAGEMENT FROM DISARMAMENT DISCUSSIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS

We think it is time for the United States to minimize its participation in the discussion of problems of disarmament in the United Nations. These discussions have no real connection with the problems around which they seem to turn, and this disconnection can be misleading. Men tend to suppose either that there is a real connection, which would lead them to think of arms limitation in a most inaccurate way, or else—and this is still worse—they reach the conclusion that the United States is cynical about disarmament and is trying merely to press for some propaganda advantage. The subject of armaments is too important, and the real interest of the United States in limiting the arms race is too great for these disadvantages to be outweighed by considerations of psychological warfare.

In making this recommendation we do not wish to be understood as asserting that it was a mistake to do what was done. That is emphatically not our view. From the initial proposals of the United States government in 1946 right through to the present day, there has been a constant and genuine effort to show the good will of the American position. But each major effort has come sharply to a halt against the wall of Soviet intransigence. And just as it seemed wise by 1948 to stop the detailed



discussion of the problem of atomic energy because it had become an empty routine, so we think it is now time to recognize that the whole approach to arms regulation through commissions of the United Nations is unproductive and even misleading.

Naturally it is not desirable that the United States should announce its new view all of a sudden and without preparation. A shift of this sort should be foreshadowed by a period in which attention is directed to the fact that there has so far been no helpful response from the Soviet Union on any point. Depending on the readiness of the United States to proceed toward some sort of serious negotiations, it might also be well to indicate the view that one reason for minimizing discussions in the United Nations is that it may be possible to make better progress elsewhere. In any case, we are not suggesting anything abrupt or unprepared.

Our general belief that discussion in the United Nations should be minimized is matched by our feeling that there is nothing to be gained by a public revision of any of the proposals which the United States has supported during the last six years. In particular, we think it would not be useful to attempt a new and modernized version of the United Nations Plan for the control of atomic energy. Our feeling is that this plan bears the marks of its year of birth, and we are persuaded that what seemed right in 1946 is no longer wholly relevant in 1953; the world we now have is in many respects different from that of 1946, and these differences are important. But the fundamental difficulty here is not in the fact that the plan is six years old; it is rather in the fact that full-fledged plans presented publicly by one side are no longer the best method of seeking a workable arrangement. A modified version of the United Nations Plan might be relatively easy to prepare, but it would not have any real meaning, and as it aged, it would raise more doubts than it resolved. The United Nations Plan has the great merit that it is a monument to real hopes and good intentions: we do not see that it is a good idea to peck at it.

##### 5. COMMUNICATION WITH THE USSR

We believe that a real effort should be made to find ways of communicating with the rulers of the Soviet Union on the range of questions posed by the arms race. Even though serious negotiation hardly seems possible at present, we think that the lesser act of genuine communication could do no harm and might have real value.

An obvious reason for a constant effort to keep open the channels of communication is that it may permit us to detect any changes in the attitude of the Soviet Union toward the conflict with the West. It is possible, for example, that in the period of the succession to Stalin there may be such a change. It is also possible that the arms race itself may tend to modify Soviet thinking; a new attitude may develop as growing armaments on both sides bring us to a time when the two Powers have "enough" power to strike each other truly staggering blows.

But beyond these specific and speculative possibilities there are more general grounds for continuing communication. Two disquieting elements in the present arms race are the possibility that Soviet rulers may seriously underestimate the importance of atomic weapons and the certainty that the American government is forced to work on the basis of an extremely limited and speculative understanding of

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Soviet capabilities and intentions. There is a chance that serious communication might be of some use in both of these matters. The danger of the arms race must be much increased if Soviet leaders fail to understand its real character; we believe that careful communication may materially reduce the chance of a disastrous Soviet miscalculation. And although we fully understand that it is not easy to decipher the true meaning of Soviet acts of communication, we think that even the most practiced deceiver tells more than he intends, and we are persuaded that it would be good to have a continuous record of the way the Kremlin sounds in communication on this subject.

We are inclined to emphasize the value of listening for sounds from Soviet representatives rather above that of any communication that the United States might be able to make, at least at the beginning. It is far from certain that we have it in our power at present to make ourselves heard and understood in the Kremlin; this is no argument for not trying, for it does suggest that it may be wise to think first of the values that may be derived from listening.

It takes two to communicate, and it is always possible that our best efforts to open conversation might be rebuffed. Of the five recommendations in this report, this is the one which depends on some response from the Soviet Union, and it is important to recognize this dependence. But we are persuaded that the United States has the diplomatic skills which would permit it to test the possibilities of communication without running any important risks, and we think it well worth it to try. If communication should prove possible, it would have just that real relationship to the dangers of our present situation which the present discussions in the United Nations lack, and in this sense it would be a fitting demonstration of the real American policy toward armaments.

The five recommendations with which we have concluded our work are none of them easy to carry out. In one form or another proposals like these have been made before and have met different kinds of opposition which prevented their acceptance. All of them will meet opposition of some sort now. It is not the province of a Panel of Consultants to decide whether it is practical now to try to overcome this opposition; that is a tactical decision and it is not our business. What we can say is that these are proposals of such a character that if they are to be carried out, they should be carried out thoroughly and well; none of these things is worth doing badly, and if they can be done only half-heartedly and against crippling resistance, they should not be done at all.

One general requirement is however suggested by all five of our recommendations: it is that there is no escape from the fact that the problem of modern armaments is intimately connected with the largest and most critical problems of national policy. The importance of the arms race is such that it is closely related to our policy toward ourselves, toward our major allies, toward the national defense, and toward the Soviet Union. This sharp relevance, in our view, argues strongly for a close coordination of the basic authority and responsibility for all major problems of atomic armament. We believe that these matters deserve the constant and serious attention of the highest officers of the government.



In the end a Panel of Consultants cannot chart a course for those who hold responsibility. Our effort of description, analysis, and recommendation cannot be more than a piece of evidence to be judged by men who must chart their own course. We would not have it otherwise. The essential component in any resolution of our difficulties must be creative leadership.

*Annex I: Some Possible Characteristics of a Realistic Agreement on the Regulation of Armaments*

In our re-consideration of the broad problem of plans for armaments regulation, our first and most important conclusion has been that blueprints for arms regulation are now undesirable. Even if the United States were presently embarking on the long process of negotiating a Convention or instrument for the regulation of armaments, much that is vital to the character of any such instrument would depend on the field of armaments. Thus, even if immediate negotiations were likely, we should need not a blueprint but rather a sense of the objective and a plan of procedure. But since we fear that at present it is hardly possible for the United States to undertake serious negotiations, our own suggestions must pertain to the future and must have a political context which is now almost wholly unknown. In these circumstances any blueprint would necessarily involve large assumptions about the political situation.

A further disturbing element in all blueprints for arms regulation is that if they are to be made public they must take account of our present fears as well as our future hopes—so they must not seem to offer any possibility that at any stage the Soviet Union might gain any advantage in the power contest. Thus the tendency is to create plans which proceed toward a reduction in arms by a set of stages each one of which tends if anything to improve the American position, and when such plans are considered from the standpoint of the Soviet Union they are likely to seem quite unreal. This unreality seems to us to be dangerous, for these paper plans seem to assert that there is such a thing as a scheme for arms regulation which is without risks and sacrifices. In a world in which Soviet Power is real and great, it seems to us unwise to offer such false hopes to the people of the free nations.

It seems more sensible to consider the problem as extremely difficult, intimately connected to political problems of all sorts, and not susceptible to easy answers. This more realistic approach leads at once to the conclusion that proposals for arms regulation should be judged against the existing dangerous and unpleasant situation, and not against some arbitrary vision of a world of total peace and harmony. And this conclusion in turn suggests that the basic requirements for a useful regulation of armaments may be somewhat different from those which most American discussion has assumed. In our view any study of arms regulation which keeps the present realities firmly in mind will tend to reach certain general views which we wish rather to sketch than to elaborate in detail.

First, since the peculiar danger of the present arms race derives from the growing possibility that the two great Powers may soon be able to strike each other direct and crippling blows, the basic objective of any scheme of arms regulation should be to

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eliminate this capability. This is not the same thing as eliminating all atomic bombs, since it is now clear—as it was not in 1945 and 1946—that atomic bombs can be decisive only if they are delivered on the target in considerable numbers. (The American requirement for a knockout atomic attack on the Soviet Union now runs well into four figures.) Moreover in strategic attack on a great power, aircraft and missiles are quite as essential as atomic weapons, and they are much more expensive. It seems reasonable to say, then, that much would be achieved if it should be possible to get a reduction in the size of stockpiles and bombing fleets such that neither side need fear a sudden knockout from the other. Such a reduction would not give assurance against the use of atomic weapons, but it would give protection against the danger of a surprise knockout blow, and this is the danger which is so critically important in its political meaning for both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Another general proposition which seems relevant is that any scheme of arms regulation which is to have a chance of acceptance by the Soviet Union must take into account the depth of the Soviet attachment to the principle of the Iron Curtain. There can be no arms regulation without some sort of inspection—and on this basic notion there can hardly be any shift in the American position. But it is important, in the interest of political reality, that such inspection do as little violence as possible to a principle which seems to stand near the center of the Soviet system. It is possible to argue, of course, that there can be no real safety until we have an open world, and the argument has force, but to accept it entirely would be to defer all hope of arms regulation until after a revolution had occurred in Russia—and perhaps still further, for it is far from clear that a new Russian revolution would bring an open society. For the present, it seems better to take some account of the Iron Curtain.

A third general proposition about arms regulation is that it should not increase other dangers while it attempts to eliminate the threat of a sudden knockout. For United States policy this clearly means that there would have to be a considerable reduction in conventional weapons to balance any limitation on the instruments of mass atomic attack. The American atomic weapon is now being used not only as a balance to the Soviet atom but also as a counterweight to the massive Soviet armies; if it were abandoned, those armies would have to be considerably trimmed. (But this last requirement might be modified insofar as non-Soviet "conventional" armed strength can become a counterweight to the Soviet armies.)

These three general propositions are very far from exhausting the topic of realistic approaches to arms regulation, but taken together they do make it possible to sketch the broad outlines of a kind of arms regulation which does not seem quite so unreal as most of the detailed plans that have been put forward in recent years. This somewhat more robust sort of scheme would be characterized by a basic agreement to reduce all major forms of armament well below the point where they threaten destruction to other major powers; such an agreement should be designed to provide wide margins of safety. In keeping with these wide margins, the scheme could get on with a relatively simple system of inspection, designed to prevent any major violation from going unnoticed, but not pretending to guarantee against relatively minor and inconclusive breaches of the agreed levels. Probably it would be more

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accurate to describe this sort of inspection as a form of "facilitated intelligence"—it would aim at nothing much more elaborate than the provision of the sort of information that was readily available in all modern countries—not excluding Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany—until the days of the Iron Curtain. Intelligence and inspection can be made far more effective and less burdensome by the development and use of the increasingly sensitive techniques of scientific intelligence. so to

We have devoted some attention to the technical problems of such a relatively simple and sturdy scheme of arms limitation, and they do not seem unmanageable. In particular we believe that it would be possible to sketch a proposal for the atomic component of such a scheme which would eliminate the danger of an atomic knockout and at the same time avoid the comprehensive and elaborate mechanisms of the current United Nations Plan. The one limitation we must set to this conclusion is that as time passes it must become steadily more difficult to establish any form of control of inspection which would guarantee against the possibility that a decisive stockpile might be successfully hidden away and never be missed by those conducting the initial inspection of plants and production records. No system of checking past production by examining plants and records can be wholly free from the possibility of error, and the sum of the possible errors will at some stage be greater than any acceptable level. The advent of thermonuclear devices makes this reservation still more important.

Skimpy as they are, these comments on the problems of plans for arms regulation do suggest that there is no basic difficulty in the many technical questions which have been debated back and forth in the United Nations in recent years. There will be real issues in any serious negotiation for a limit on armaments, but there are certainly ways of meeting whatever is real in the sort of objections the Soviet Union has so far put forward.

# Inadvertent Nuclear War?

Barry R. Posen

## Escalation and NATO's Northern Flank

Could a major East-West conventional war be kept conventional? American policymakers increasingly seem to think so. Recent discussions of such a clash reflect the belief that protracted conventional conflict is possible, if only the West fields sufficient conventional forces and acquires an adequate industrial mobilization base. Indeed, the Reagan Administration has embraced the idea of preparing for a long conventional war, as evidenced by its concern with the mobilization potential of the American defense industry.<sup>1</sup> Underlying this policy is the belief that the United States should be prepared to fight a war that, in duration and character, resembles World War II. American decision-makers seem confident of their ability to avoid nuclear escalation in such a war if they so desire.

That confidence is dangerous and unwarranted. It fails to take into account that intense conventional operations may *cause* nuclear escalation by threatening or destroying strategic nuclear forces. The operational requirements (or preferences) for conducting a conventional war may thus unleash enormous, and possibly uncontrollable, escalatory pressures despite the desires of American or Soviet policymakers. Moreover, the potential sources of such escalation are deeply rooted in the nature of the force structures and military strategies of the superpowers, as well as in the technological and geographical circumstances of large-scale East-West conflict. If the escalatory pressures

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1. See, for example, the accounts of Secretary Weinberger's views in George Wilson, "Weinberger Order: Plan for Wider War," *The Boston Globe*, July 17, 1981; and Richard Halloran, "Weinberger Tells of New Conventional-Force Strategy," *The New York Times*, May 7, 1981. For further indications of the Administration's views on this subject, see also Richard Halloran, "Needed: A Leader for the Joint Chiefs," *The New York Times*, February 1, 1982; Richard Halloran, "Reagan Selling Navy Budget as Heart of Military Mission," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1982; and Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress, FY 1983*, pp. 1-13, 16-17, 28-29.